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International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances
Twelfth session

Summary record of the 217th meeting*
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 17 March 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Corcuera Cabezut

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* No summary records were prepared for the 206th to 216th meetings.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Other matters

Informal report on the twelfth session

1. **Mr. López Ortega** (Rapporteur), in presenting the Committee's informal report on its twelfth session, said that the session had been opened by the Chief of the Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, Human Rights Treaties Branch, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mr. Simon Walker, and subsequently chaired by Mr. Corcuera Cabezut, both of whom had stressed that the renewal of the Committee's mandate by the Conference of the States Parties in December 2017 illustrated the importance of the Convention and the Committee's work in confronting modern forms of enforced disappearance. Thereafter, the Committee had considered some of the suggestions put forward by States parties at the Conference, had held highly constructive dialogues with Cuba, Ecuador and Senegal and had adopted the related concluding observations. It had also adopted lists of issues with regard to Gabon and Lithuania, as well as the provisional agenda for the thirteenth session.

Annual report of the Committee to the General Assembly

2. **Mr. López Ortega** said that the Committee's annual report to the General Assembly (to be issued under the symbol A/72/56) reproduced the informal reports on its eleventh and twelfth sessions and included sections on the election of the new Chair and Bureau, the review of State party reports and steps taken in relation to requests for urgent action. Recent ratifications by the Central African Republic, Czechia, Seychelles and Switzerland had brought to 56 the number of States parties to the Convention.

3. *The annual report was adopted.*

Closure of the session

4. **The Chair** said that it was important to recall that the purpose of the interactive dialogues and concluding observations was to achieve the greatest possible implementation of the Convention in the domestic arena. Furthermore, it was the Committee's role to interpret the Convention, ask States parties about their implementation of the Convention, commend them on their strengths and formulate recommendations for improvement. While it was one of the Committee's vital tasks to achieve universal ratification, it was equally important that States parties recognized its competence to receive and consider individual communications so that victims had access to an additional remedy. Thus, wider ratification, increased recognition of the competence of the treaty bodies and fuller implementation of the treaty body instruments and recommendations would go a long way towards strengthening the system.

5. **Mr. Decaux** said that, despite the diverse backgrounds of the four members of the Committee whose term of office was coming to an end, they were all driven by the same sense of humanity and legal ideals. He particularly wished to highlight Mr. López Ortega's argumentational prowess, commitment to consensus and ability to keep legitimate differences of opinion from becoming personal. Mr. Yakushiji, for his part, was gifted in getting to the legal crux of a matter and had done considerable work on the role of national institutions in implementing the Convention.

6. **Mr. Huhle**, paying tribute to Mr. Al-Obaidi's diligence and astonishing memory and to Mr. Hazan's understanding of the needs of the relatives of disappeared persons, said he hoped that all the departing members would continue to be involved in the work of the Committee.

7. **Mr. Al-Obaidi**, thanking his fellow Committee members and all those who supported the Committee in its work, said that he would be pleased to continue providing insight on the Arab legal system and culture whenever the Committee so required.

8. **Mr. Hazan** said that, in addition to his colleagues, OHCHR and secretariat staff, States parties and non-governmental organizations, he wished to extend his most heartfelt

thanks to the families of disappeared persons for their efforts to defend the Convention and the Committee. He was especially grateful to the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo for their contribution to his growth as a lawyer and as a human rights defender.

9. **Mr. López Ortega** said that, while he was quite sad to be leaving the Committee, he was full of confidence in its ability to achieve as yet unattained goals. Since talking about the Convention was the best way of defending it, he would continue to do his part to raise its profile.

10. **Mr. Yakushiji**, recalling that he had had no experience with human rights outside of Japan or with the treaty body system prior to joining the Committee, said that he thanked support staff and his colleagues for everything that they had taught him. He would continue to work on the issue of enforced disappearance in the academic sphere.

11. **Mr. Walker** (OHCHR), in thanking the outgoing members of the Committee, said that he looked forward to meeting and working with them again in future.

12. **The Chair**, after the customary exchange of courtesies, declared the twelfth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances closed.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.